



## First Nations Elders Oral History Project: Uncle Russell Boomi Hegarty Oral History

*all yours*

**Interviewee:** Uncle Russell Boomi Hegarty [BH]

**Interviewer:** Dean Saffron [DS]

**Date:** 17 OCT 2023

DS

So, my name's Dean Saffron. I'm a photographer and filmmaker for the Queensland State Library. Today we've got Uncle Boomi and the project, or the purpose of recording this video is to get Uncle Russell Boomi Hegarty's life story and in particular, the firsthand knowledge that only he has about the nineteen original settlements at Cherbourg in Queensland.

Uncle, could you just tell me your full name, age, and your, where you come from?

BH

Russell James Hegarty is my full name. I was born in Cherbourg, 1949, and, did my school here. I grew up here till I was about 16, 17, and then I left and I had to go outside for work and, but I was always coming back, back and forth, back and forth, and then went at work for about a month somewhere and come in for two weeks, got on the p\*\*s and blew all my money and had to go back out to work sooner than I expected. So that sort of life I had growing up, like, and that was, that was my early age. But, look, I can go right back to when I was a kid sort of thing. Like I said, born here and had had a lot of interaction with my uncles and aunties and moms and dad, and especially the grandparents, grandmother, grandfather. And when, in my early and when I, like, but when I was about three to four months old, I got shifted into the, what they called the baby quarters here in here in Cherbourg and from there until I was about five or six, they shifted me over to the boys' dormitory then just to do schooling from here. See? And, and I stayed there until I was about 10 or 11, I think, or 12, somewhere around there. Then my grandmother took me then and, and, and my grandfather, they took me outta the boys' home outta the dormitory. And I reared up with

them then and, uh, that's when I, the, all that knowledge come in, you know what I mean? They're taking me out and in the bush every day, nearly talk fishing, hunting, and cutting. Boomerang didgeridoo everything, you know, painting and all that sort of stuff.

That's where I got all my knowledge of my grandfather mainly. And then, as I got to towards the teenage years, you know what you like when you're a teenage, you wander around a bit then, you know. So, uh, I actually go to other people's places, you know, one of them old fella old fella called Billy Hopkins, I used to be with him for years, you like growing up in my teenage years, he sort of adopted me sort of thing. And I used to go there for feed sleep when I didn't go back home and all my grandparents and everybody knew where I'd be, you know what I mean? Oh, he's up there with that old fellow up there, and he did the same thing with me. He taught me how to hunt and fish and ride, he was a horseman and he to chuck me on the horse. And we used to go to the back country ride at the forestry, ride the way there. And everywhere I went with him was on horseback, when we rode, it was fun too. And we to chase kangaroos on the horses and, you know, just try to dive on them, silly young kids, we to get a couple too. But they'd come back and then my grandparents would take me out again. They'd like cutting boomerang in an old sulky, you should get the old sulky and just to go out, like out towards, forest today and cut a few roots, you know, boomerang roots and chuck 'em in the Sulky.

We used to camp there for the weekend, come back Sunday night late hunt. We used to hunt back on them, hunt with them dogs, come back home. Caught we got on our hunt back home, we bought it home and fed the people in the community. You know, we did that every weekend. As soon as a few months old, they, the white people in the communities used to send the young mothers out to camps, you know, out to stations as domestic mob. And they got my mother and they sent her out there, she on the station cooking and cleaning and wash them and all the stuff for the station owners sort of thing.

And when they sent her out, they put me in here then see, they said, we have to take this boy and take him in here, and you gotta go and work. See, and she might go out for months

and months, you know, and I might only see her a couple of times a year sort of thing. Like, you know, see your mother. And when she come out from work, we used to not much money. They never got paid much well, the, the Department of Aboriginal in Brisbane, you know, all of them mob when she worked at there, all the money went into a banking account for her see, for herself. She'd been out there for years, and she come and she had nothing, broke as another a cent, you know, up a couple of dollars. But all the money she ended, she, she never received, you know? So, and that bring, not only with mother, that's with everybody in on the community. Every woman that went out never got what they were supposed to get. You know, like they might give 'em. They used to come down this building here now and get \$2 at a time, you know, and things like that when they need it. And, but nothing in a lump sum. Nothing. Nothing. And she died with probably hundreds of dollars, still, still there, you know, that owe to her. And, uh, I never seen that. We never seen it. She never seen it. And that was, that was the thingy then in Cherbourg that was when, when I was young, younger kid then, like what we always had our grandparents, you know, to, to look after us sort of thing, when I wasn't not in a dorm , During the weekends with my grandparents, and we got well fed, you know what I mean? You know, even though they were on rations, getting rations every Monday for kids and we never starved anyway.

Them old fellas went out and got fishing and all that sort of stuff, and got their bush tuck and brought it in in. Them old people really made sure that you never starved you know, and, at wintertime we'd all sleep around the fire then, you know, they chucked the blank on that blanket. They made them flower bags and big, big flower bags. They cut that up and sew that up together, you know, like, might be about from oh six foot by three foot, and the old flower bag. So, I wash 'em, chuck 'em in the water, and out to dry. And then we used that for blanket then to sleep on, not mattress, no nothing in them. And we just huddled up in the old flower bag, you know, and they were warm too, heavy, and warm. But and if it was cold, we got them dogs that, to sleep, sleep around us, to keep us warm. And we used to fight over them dogs you know, they fell asleep with me the night, you know, we get him and hold him

there. And then sleep on your foot, your foot mainly, you know, cold and rainy. And we used to fight over 'em, but, uh, but we used to have a good sleep and get up in the morning and always super all a good breakfast was, you know, might be porridge, what they got from the ration know, and, and milk from over the farm. They used to walk over the dairy farm, mob then they had a big dairy from, they used always have that porridge in the morning and make a damper or something like that. And that was going on for years, in my younger days and really younger days. And not only me, my brothers and sisters too, you know, we all had that one grandmother, you know, and grandfather who looked after us. But it was a good life. I grew up, uh, not wanting for anything. I've seen a lot of stuff though, what kids shouldn't see, you know, like all the abuse my grandparents would get from the white administration, here in Cherbourg that time and, and, and seeing all of that s\*\*t, you know, going on with, with, with my grandmothers and, and it makes, even when I was a kid, I would get really upset and want to go and, but you couldn't, you know, wanted to go and do something.

DS

Uncle , there's a few things I want to ask you about school and daily life ,but what you have said is incredible , so the thing i need to know now and i think everyone will ask. Because mum was forced to go away.

BH

Go away, yeah.

DS

How did your relationship go with mum?

BH

Well, that's an interesting question because I got a couple of older sisters and, uh, younger sister who will always talk about mum, you know, and, and when I go, go visit them, and, I could tell them, I said, yeah, I, I knew her, but that's just about all I like our, we relationship,

and we never bonded, you know what I mean? Never got close to her because I didn't have that opportunity. See, she loved, I knew she loved me, and, and I loved her but, but we never bonded until this day. I often think about that. I like, soon as i got a teenager, I had my own children. And that's why I'm very close to my children. I won't let 'em go. You know? I've still got 'em with me. I still love 'em very much, you know, because of my history. You know, I, I tell my wife, I said, I'm not, these kids not going without a father or a mother. They're gonna have me till the day I die. And you, you know what I mean? And sort of thing. And, but, that bonding deal affected me. Like when I got out and went out of a community, I left here a very bitter person, you know, very bitter because of that. Now, that upbringing I had in the dormitory and in, in the baby quarters, I, I didn't know. I grew up very bitter with the world, everybody. And I know I, that's why I got violent in my later teens and ended up in and outta jail sort of thing.

And that goes back to that I know today, you know, that it all stemmed from this upbringing, your head in this, in this institution, you know, in, yeah, I used to fight all the time, but that, I left a very bitter man. No deep love for anybody, you know? I had a girlfriend, but girlfriends, you know, over the years, you know, but I didn't love them you know, as much as you normally should, you know, love your partners and all that sort of stuff. And, but, even today, I've got a wife now with kids, you know, but if she died tomorrow or, or she got leave me tomorrow, I wouldn't give a trick, you know? It wouldn't affect me. Only thing that would affect me is if she took the kids, she took the kids, then I'd go off. But, but, uh, she could leave tomorrow and no affection, nothing here. Nothing in the heart anymore, you know? It's, it's just only the children. That's the only thing I love my children dearly. You know, even today, when I go home, when I have a sleep, I my mind always go back to my children, you know, like I miss 'em that much, you know, even when way up in now working with Neil Silver lining, now, I still miss 'em, you know? But but I know they're safe with the partner. I got now you know?

DS

I think they're very, very blessed. And you've, explained that well, and it's beautiful 'cause you're such an incredible Elder and inspiration to all of us. Can we go back to what life was like in the dorm for you? What would a day entail? Like what would you do each day?

BH

Well, yeah, well, there were things that happened in the dormitory too when I was here. Like, the people that lived in the dormitory are getting compensated now for all the trauma they went through. See, and we can tell our anything because there's no history about it. No, all the files, when we lived here, that and, they wouldn't have nothing on record about me living here or anybody. It all got conveniently burnt in the fire see and all the abuse that all went, any, like sexual abuse and abuse generally, that happened in this dormitory, but there's nothing there to, you know, go. So, I can literally tell 'em anything, you know, I can literally tell them and, and, you know, and if that, oh no, that didn't happen. You know, the, the white people say no, that never happened, you know? And that's what it is. Then they believe them.

But you could be telling the truth, telling your story, the pain you went through, and nobody would believe you because no record, you know, no white man record. And it's all shocking. But, but today, we all getting compensated now, you know, not, not to the certain extent that know, I got groomed here. I never got abused, but, you know, but this, old fella used, they have these, uh, old fellas coming in, you know, or a middle aged fellas coming in just at nighttime just to look after it, you know, keep an eye on us, see if we run or fight or that sort of thing. Had about two, you know, just walking around every night, just having a cup of tea and smoke just to keep an eye on you, you know, see if you get any trouble. And some of them old fellows abused them young boys too, see, and, and, and, and things like that happened. It, it definitely, I'd seen it couple of times with my own eyes, you know, I told a story to this dormitory thing now where we've gone for our compensation. I, I told 'em who was, who I seen and one of that sort of thing, and who done it if I knew, you know, and there was an old fella used to live, right then the end here. Straight down the end here, he used to

buy me chocolate and lollies and all that sort of stuff just to try to groom you, you know. But lucky I was a very smart young boy, and I said, no, F this, I'm getting there to be something happening here, and I don't want no part of this. So might've been about seven or eight. And I went back and he said, trying to coax me back, and now I'm not going in your room. And I stayed away then, but other kids were going to the room, you know what I mean? Just for a feed. My mind was set. I said, no. I said, I'm not going in there, you know, really, of course, we knew, me and a few, all the kids in the building knew what was happening. I knew. And then everybody in the dormitory knew what was happening. But you couldn't tell anybody. You'd tell the superintendent either here, the guy that was in charge of this thing. Then, you know, you, you tell them, you get a bloody hiding don't go, I tell a lies, you know, things like that. And they just belt you for trying to share your pain with them, you know, tell them your story and, and they just flog you, you know? And, and, uh, nobody listens. Nobody listened. But, but we survived. Well, I come out really good, you know what I mean? Nothing happened to me. You know, we, and, uh, but I feel sorry for them others, other guys that come out like that. You know, I, we, we had to get up, we had to make our own bed and, and, and that sort of thing. Get up our breakfast, do our own dishes, stuff like that, and shower, get our self ready for school, you know? Well, they had women in the iron and all your clothes and that sort of thing. Well, that was a good thing. And we all go to school very clean and well-dressed sort of thing. And when you come home in the evening, then you had work to do, you know, round the yard and cleaning and mowing and rake and things up and that sort of thing. But they did on the weekend sometime, they took us out in the bush bit of fishing and bit of gathering and that sort of stuff, you know, that always happened. And, and that was a magic time. And when we used to go bush, we all be freezing. We'd just run around and do our own thing. And I to love that part of it, because I'm a bushman, so I grew up a bushman and I'm still a bushman today. And, I still love them sort of, and I still love it today. But they were good times. But in the back of your head, there was, you know, you're

going on to this s\*\*t going on in the dormitory out in the bush camp, we said, used to ache coming back and, you know, to all the stuff that went on.

DS

You know, Uncle, that's mind blowing, you know?

BH

And you know, there's, there's no record of it. No white man, when we claim claiming for this compensation, nobody believes the stories. You tell 'em, you know? And that's what hurts, that, that, uh, you know, you go to a solicitor or something, they write it down and nah, this is b\*\*\*\*\*t. Them things never happened, you know?

DS

But it bloody happened. You say it. I know it did. Oh, man. Feeding them. So let's ask then, um, can you tell me about where your family originally came from, that when they were brought here, what language you speak? And just maybe a couple of, um, like were customs kept, like did you still do customs when you were a little fella?

BH

A little bit, yeah. Like, uh, well, my old fella in the photo there, my grandfather there, he come from Townsville. See bindu wulgurukaba, that's his country. He got bought here. When he was a kid, they lived in the humpy right at the back of Cherbourg and they lived there with his father, plus he had another brother and about four Sisters, they all got bought near, bought here from Townsville over there. See, that's my grandfather. And, uh, my mother was born here in Cherbourg though. And, my other grandparents were from Central Queensland, Kara low country see at Emerald in all them places, you know. And my grandfather was on my father's side. My grandmother had my father from Bentinck Island, she'd come down and she was working on the station at Mitchell, and she had my dad and Mitchell living. And so I'm

that's the Goomeri tribe. See, so that's Gulf Country one Bentinck island country that's Cardills. And this one done here Goomeri where my dad was born then, you know.

DS

Did any of the people, when they were brought here, what were they told? Did they ever tell you what they were told on why they were brought here?

BH

No. But you know, you don't have to rocket science to know what know, know what. They wanted them out of their road because of the land, you know, all the beautiful country they had, they didn't want us Black fellas to have it. They wanted it, so they shifted them out and just took over. But that's what it was. Money. Money.

DS

Okay. So tell me, what language do you speak on?

BH

Well, a little bit of Wakka little bit of Cardinal, little bit of everything, little bit of Ghungalu, little bit of Wulgurukaba just bits and pieces, you know, from all, I, I talk to my kids about all that lingo, what I know, you know, I, I can't speak in fluently though, but, I know, like I say, like bread, smoke , milk, wine, beer, all sort of stuff, you know, woman, man and all, all that sort of stuff. But, all my kids picking that all up now. So I speak to 'em when I'm home. They know what I'm talking. If I want something. Oh, a bit of this, that in lingo, they know, you know, so it's still carrying on a little bit, but, but fluently, no, I can't.

DS

Well, it's pretty amazing. I mean, most Australians don't even speak correct English. And you can speak six or seven languages.

BH

Languages, yeah. Bit from here. Bit from there, yeah.

DS

What's it like being a First Nations person to you? Like being a proud Aboriginal? What does it mean to you?

BH

It means the world. I love it, you know, I, truth God, I wouldn't wanna be anything else, you know, but an Aborigine from Australia, living in Australia with my people, with my family, you know, and like I said, I'm a very proud Aborigine. And even my kids, you know, they grow up and they're very proud people, proud of kids too. Now they grow up. We live in a place called Boona, and everybody know the Ab some, some of them really feel like you, you know? And my boy and my girl, and, but, but they tell everybody when they got as well. I'm First Nation now. I'm an Aborigine, you know, they tell 'em. And, that boy kept a lot, got a lot of s\*\*t from the kids there, you know, but he's six foot seven now, so they, they don't mess with him now. They don't mess with him now. So, they just accept him and they love him for that. Now, you know, he get a lot of friends and so many girlfriends too. There's a spokesman.

DS

Can you tell me what you did with Life Without Barriers?

BH

Well, same thing I'm doing here, nearly, you know what I mean? Like, I got a big property in place called Boona. Got about a hundred acres there. I built, me and my two boys now, we built two big sheds there. Built a kitchen, put a wood stove in there, just a camp and ground for my work, you know what I mean? Life Without Barriers helped me with all the material and that sort of stuff. But the physical work that we, me and my two boys, one was about 10, one was about 14, I think, and they should come and do the best they can. Well, they've done a good job too. I got a couple of friends down there too, just come in on the weekend with the big posts. We cut and help me put them in and cement the floor and all that sort of stuff. So I built that for them children. I should work in child safety with, you know, like with

Life Without Barriers for the boys. I started off with Life Without Barriers as a youth advocacy. And then, I should do residential stuff. Then, when my first year, but that wasn't me, you know, that what I told him. I said, no, this is not me. I can't do this. I said, I'm a bushman. I said, well, all my knowledge is in the bush, so give the kids to me, and if I can take 'em bush. And they trialed me for six months then. And, I took 'em out and just camping in tents, you know, 10 of them in tents. And, uh, after six months, then bang, it took off then it went for 15 years until I retired. So I must've been doing something right there. You know, I think about four or five boys out on the, from, on the weekend, maybe Friday, Saturday, Sunday mainly. Or if there was a public holiday in between, I take them at for six or seven days, you know, but, mainly Friday, Sunday, and get them on Sunday night, you know, take them out to my property. From there, we'd go from there, like out a big 4x4 wheel drive.

Then we used to go over to Warwick and places like that and just drive around, get them boomerangs, getting didgeridoos, come back, do a bit of hunting with 'em, traditional hunting, with some boys now, come back, cook it all up that night, and we'll have a feed, you know, give them a feed, give 'em a taste. If they like it, good. If they didn't, you know, or good too, then, we'd come back and I'd make didgeridoos with them the next day on Saturday with a full day Saturday, we'd make diges and boomerangs and did a bit of art work with them. Nighttime. I sat down and tell 'em a lot of stories, you know, and, and, and they, to sit around the fire like that, troubled kids, you know? And they should sit around the fire like that. And some of them wouldn't sleep, but you know, in, in, in in town they wouldn't. But when they came out there, they just round a fire. Dozing off go on bedtime now, and then go into bed and just go straight to sleep, have a good night's sleep, and that was it, you know? And they loved it. Most of them did. You know, I only had a couple of kids that, that don't sort click to what you do, you know? But that 95% of them loved it, you know? I said, you know, you're sitting down with me now. I'm telling you all these stories. I take your hunting, take your artifacts, all that sort of stuff. Me, old black feeling, like me, I said, I'm sitting down here teaching you guys now. I said, you know, when you got an old man like me, you'll be telling

your children, your grandchildren that you went out with an old fellow called Boomi Hegarty out in the bush. I said, you're not gonna forget me. You know? I said, you'll always remember me. And they will too. I believe I strongly believe that.

DS

Tell me all about how you became. SI think it's very important to us to, to know how you became the Lore man. And it's not about money, it's not about families, it's about, you know, what you said the other day.

BH

Yeah. Oh yeah. I like that story too, you know, and I'm still trying to live up to them old people today. They're all gone now, but, you know, they left all that trust me. So that was a big thing for me, or for anybody actually. Well, I used to work as a ranger here. See, years ago, I had about 40 young people working with me. We built a big shed down there and I to walk around here with all the young people getting into trouble and that sort of thing. But before that happened, I used, I was in jail. I was in jail for a while, and I come outta jail and I worked up at the hospital. Then there's an orderly see up at the hospital for about six months. And while I was up there, the council and the old people got together and they needed somebody to teach our young people, you know, that'd get into trouble. Get the culture back into 'em. See, so they, they needed someone. And, all them, there was four Elders here on the community then. Lovely old men, but, they going now, bless their souls, but, they come up to the, well, we are working in the hospital then. They explained everything to me. They said, now boy, we need somebody to take over and teach these young fellows right from wrong, culture in a cultural way, you know what I mean? And take 'em at Bush, do things, you know, with them and talk to them and that sort of thing. And, we said, we was thinking about everybody, and you were the perfect choice for us see, the four of 'em got together, you were the perfect choice.

And, I said, yeah. I said, I just come outta jail. See, I thinking, oh, geez. And they said, now look, all you gotta do, sign this form here. And you got the job coming from the, and they were the senior many then, you know, nobody questioned them. What they say goes, you know, so I signed up form week, week after I had the job, then job, big four wheel drive, everything I had, you know, everything I wanted for the bush, you know? And when as soon as I went on, I tell my girlfriend, and I said, what the hell they see in me? I just come outta jail. And, and you know, I said, must be something special. I said, they see something in me that I can't see. I said, you know what I mean? They forward and believe that I got something to give and, and that honor, oh man, it's still with me today. It's still with me today. You know what I mean? Every time I come up here talking to kids, you know, talking to kids, and I can't teach the wrong thing or anything like that because my, if I do the wrong thing, you know, my mind go back to the old fella. I said, they put their trust in me, so I gotta do this. Right? Anything I do now in the bush, I gotta do it right, because I believe they're still watching me, you know? You know. And so I gotta, and they put their trust in me, and that was 26, 7, 8 years ago. When they first told me. And I was drinking, fighting, and drugging and everything then, you know. But from that day on, never touched a drink, never touch drugs. After that day when they spoke to me, I give it all away. And still today, I, I don't, you know, and because I had to, well, that's what they told me, you've gotta give all your s\*\*t up what you're doing there. If you want to teach these young fellas and, you know, go out in the bush and get your culture, you've gotta give all that up. And, I did too from this day, you know, about 28 years ago, I think. Yeah.

DS

And you told me a funny story where you said, Uncle, you needed a blue card. Can you tell me about that?

BH

Yeah, working with kids, see, and, even today, you've gotta have a blue card before you talk to any children now sort of thing. And, and, uh, and I didn't have a blue card, you know, just come outta prison and, you know, all gonna gimme a blue card, you know, that sort of thing. And, uh, so they took me into the bloke and he was a regional director of this department of communities. And they took me to see this manager, see? And he was there and they got a fix the date to have a yarn appointment with him. See? And he come up from Maryborough, I think it was, and he was there for one day and went into his office and these four men went, four old people coming with me then. And they said this, this is, they introduced themselves and me to this fellow and this, they said, this is this boy here. He's trying to fix our people up out there. And we honestly trust him. We believe in this boy, but only one problem. He can't talk with the kids unless he get a blue card, you know? So, we would really want him to get the blue card so he can start his work, you know? And, and they talked to her for about half an hour, and they old people told him all the stories about, you know, about the young people and, uh, and about this blue card thing, you know what, you know, and told about it. He in and outta jail, but he, but this, this young boy, we've seen him grow up from kid, you know, we've seen him grow up to what he is now, you know, and we always, we all know what life he'd been through and what he is today, and we think he's a special Person. See? So we'd hope you'd give him a blue card next week in the mail out, a blue card fair dinkum, and oh, that support Jesus. And, uh, even today, I still can't figure out why that, what the hell they seen in me, you know? But I can understand now, you know, I got older, I said, that's what they seen in me. So, I gotta keep doing this sort of teaching until I die.

DS

Can you just, uh, tell me about the 25 you've discovered. We first thought there was 19, but 25 sites of the original Cherbourg. Can you tell us about that?

BH

Yeah, well, this was before they built Cherbourg. See, they, they, with the stolen generation, they brought people from everywhere, all over, nearly Australia, nearly, and up north, the east, west, south. And they like a dumping ground. And you know, they just brought em here and chucked here . And most of the families went out Bush, no, built Humpies out in the bush and lived in the bush out there, out the back here, and then down towards were there. And, me and Neal with Silver Lining, they organized something, you know, it'd be a bit of finance for me to come up and, and take 'em around the back country, you know, just to, and, I knew every place where the old fellas lived, you know, every from the old people and them telling me.

And they took me out there when I become a ranger, four wheel drive, jumping. And I drove 'em around and they said, got that, and they told me, all live there, all camp there, and that's right, 25 of 'em we found. And, and that's what we're doing now. We just going back and marking them places now, numbering them. And he put the GPS on a them, Yeah, Neal here. And so 25, you know, 25 families, you families who, who lived that there. They wouldn't come in until they started building houses and all that sort of stuff. Then they moved in, you know what I mean?

DS

How long do you think that was roughly? Did the Elders tell you that period that they were just living out in the bush without all these buildings?

BH

Oh, must have been Good.15 to 20 years. Because my grandfather came, that guy there on the left in there, he come down then when he was about 10 or 11, then he come into work and the community has a carpenter when he was 14,so must have been and my old great-great-grandfather, he stayed out there. He, he lived out there. But this, my grandfather come in and built a community and he went back home on the weekend, and he probably camped here and worked there. He built nearly every house on the community. He was a head

carpenter, you know. And they probably lived out there for, oh man, since she was four till about, since she got 14. He built his own house up here with Uncle Eric there. Now, you know, that's the fella built that house. And he had all his children and he got married and must be good. 20 years, or 30 years.

DS

Okay. So tell me about one of the places the family that lived there that you have shown me, which is, and had the water beside it, the deep water. And we went to yesterday. Duncan Murray. Yeah, George Duncan. He lived there. They built a as before him, this was way back before I was born, you know, and he was my grandfather too, sort of thing. And, my uncle, they all grew up, all born there and all become men from that place. So they was George Duncan first and an old fella called Ginger Slathery. Must have been some relation to even that old fellow used to live there, plus grandfather, George's wife and kids, you know, and, and they all grew up there on this place now. And he was in charge of the slaughter yard, and then they used to kill the bullocks and cut 'em up for the community and bring it into the butcher shop, what used to be over here. They used to cut all that meat up and he was in charge of that to keep everybody away from the slaughter yard. And he'd been doing that for years. And all his kids grew up there. And, uh, after a while, he passed on an old age, and the Duncan family moved out and, and when they moved out, the old fella Sam Murray and he moved in and he reared all his family up in that same old place now. And, I used to go out there when I was a kid, you know? Oh, beautiful place. It was, but bit rough now, you know, trees everywhere. And, and, but, but when I was used to go out there, there was all mold, not mold, but short grass and green, you know, see, there was a lot of water in that creek that they said, get that water and just water all the plants and veg, a lot of vegetables there and chooks, everything was a farm, chooks and all that sort of stuff. But, but it, it was beautiful there. We used to in that dry gully, we used to swim, we swim with our kids and we to even catch fish in there, but it's drying now. But we used to catch fish in there, go around there swimming, you know, all day. And the old people just to, that's just to let us go, you know?

And no trouble with them. Kids know what they're doing, you know? Well, growing up in a community, you, you had to know everything, you know, like the dangers and that sort of stuff. They, they knew, we know what to be wary of, especially snakes, you know, we snake, we s\*\*t ourselves. So when we were kids, but, but that was good then. It, it was a beautiful time, you know, growing up, you know, as a young kid on Cherbourg, God, that was, that was the best years of my life, you know, growing up on Cherbourg, as a young kid. Uh, even today, I think about, you know, I tell my family and everybody, they were the best years of my life being an Aborigine living on a mission with my family, you know? Yeah. Can't get any better. Can't get any better than that. As a young kid, you wouldn't get any, you know, we had everything, you know, We had a lot of discipline and that sort of stuff too, but that was part of culture. Then magic, There's also, you showed me the dump site. That's the only way I can describe it for, the amount of people that died with the Spanish flu, they just used it.

DS

Can you explain what they did?

BH

Well, not far from the place. I'm just talking about up a bit further, coming back this way. There's a old cemetery there now. It's all run down there, but we put posts in there just to recognize the place where they got buried, see, and, it's Callalily cemetery, which mean people from out near Quilpie, Thargomindahall, them places, you know, they were bought here too, see? And they lived up at the cemetery there near the cemetery. And, and, and, uh, when they died, they took 'em down there and buried them in this one place. And after a while, that's after a few years that Spanish flu come through even or something, I dunno got here, but they, they, they dug a big old and they buried 84 people. They buried there in that big hole, you know, just to dump it thing, just put 'em in and buried them there, you know, buried them in that Callalily Cemetery now. And, so very sacred site in know, like, well, I marked it out that, that, that graveyard. Anyway, nobody won't forget. I marked this out about

20 years ago, just so nobody would forget, you know? And we had to find it when there was a ranger had a few boys. We did dug holes and put posts in there, so, so they knew where it was, you know. But we were talking to a few blokes on the community, where can they come out with, us and they were suggesting, oh, we're gonna come back and fix this up, you know, mow it. I whip a snippets put, might put a fence around and things like that, the good fence and keep it, uh, a whipper snippet, you know, and, and, and, and clean. We said we can clean all this. Even them old 25 sites I talked about there was, they was thinking about just whipper sniping with the area where the old people lived and, and just, you know, just to recognize, you know, that we're still looking after you. Yeah.

DS

And what's the importance, do you think that the heritage of Cherbourg was not, um, as you said, there was paper trails that just disappeared, burnt accidentally. How important is it for our future generations to know about these 25 sites? Oh, very important. You know? Well, some, uh, most of the people here didn't know about them sites, see is lucky. I still had it in my head, you know old as I am now, and not many left. Well, it left me with that sort of knowledge of where, places were, but but it's important to the community now, like the younger generation now, like especially moms and dads, you know, that don't know about it, but they don't now, you know, that they can go out that way with their family now, Hey, GPS, they go out there and they take a chair out of them, have a little barbecue, you know, where their ancestors used to live. You know, they sit down there with their kids and just talk about the old people then. And, and, and that's when they clean it up, you know? And that's what I hope will come of it, you know, that'll carry on and won't be forgotten. Yeah.

DS

In closing, what would you say the biggest experience in your life? Would it be the one where the four elders chose you? Would that be the biggest?

BH

Definitely. Okay. Definitely that one. Yeah. I'm a new man because of them, you know.

DS

What's your philosophy on giving a living a good life, and what would be the last thing you would like if I said to you can tell the world something for thousands of years, they will hear this. What message would you like to leave to the world?

BH

Oh, well, you know, as an Aboriginal man from Australia, like growing up as an Aborigine boy on a mission in Queensland and growing up as an Aborigine boy was the best years of my life. I'm, I'm going to 75 and even now, today, I'm a very, very lucky man to add that journey to, to where I am today. You know, and I'd advise everybody, get your cultures stick, with your culture, live your culture, respect your elders and all that sort of stuff. And well, I still do that today. And, uh, well, that's all. I think, you know what I mean? Just, just live with your culture. That's the main thing. Don't throw your culture away, because that's everything, everything. Your culture is everything about us white man thing. You know, we get a schooling education. This plays a big part too, believe me. You know, but you, you don't get let, don't let go of your culture. Don't knowing who you are, what you are, and that shows you where you're going. You know, your future. You have that culture in your head. You take it with you, take it with you right to where you wanna be, and you grow up decent man like I am. I live in, I'm living in my dreamtime today. You know, my dreaming, I'm living it well because of my culture. I'm happy, I'm the happiest man in the world because all of that sort, all the cultural stuff and my dreamtime's here, I'm sitting there, I'm in my dreamtime. And to tell you that's about the culture. Don't let it go. Grab it, grasp it, and take it with you. Don't ever forget it and teach you young. Yeah.

DS

I'd like to thank you Uncle Boomi for taking the time out to do, for doing this video and doing this interview. And I know that it is something that will inspire thousands of people now and in the future. So thank you.

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